

**South Ayrshire Council**

**Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities  
to Audit and Governance Panel  
of 22 March 2023**

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**Subject: Best Value Action Plan 2021-22 – Update**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the progress made in delivering the actions identified in the Best Value Assurance Report - [Action Plan 2021-22](#).

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Panel**

- 2.1.1 scrutinises the content of the Best Value Action Plan 2021-22 update report;**
- 2.1.2 considers the progress through the narrative set out within [Appendix 1](#); and**
- 2.1.3 notes the fieldwork being undertaken by Audit Scotland in relation to a thematic audit of the Council's Leadership.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 places statutory duties on Councils in relation to Best Value. The audit of Best Value is a continuous process that forms part of the annual audit of every Council. Findings are reported each year through the Annual Audit Report.
- 3.2 In addition, the Controller of Audit will present a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission at least once during the five-year audit appointment for each Council. Audit Scotland published the Council's [Best Value Assurance Report](#) published in October 2021.
- 3.3 In response to the recommendations in the report, an [action plan](#) was developed by officers and agreed by Council in December 2021. Members agreed that progress on the action plan should be reported to the Audit and Governance Panel quarterly.
- 3.4 Audit Scotland has now changed the approach to Best Value Audits and have move to a thematic model. South Ayrshire is one of five local Authorities being audited this year under the theme of Leadership. The field work will take place between

January and May 2023 with an interim report being presented to Audit and Governance Panel on 28 June 2023.

#### **4. Proposals**

4.1 It is proposed that members of the Audit and Governance Panel scrutinise the attached report ([Appendix 1](#)), note that all actions are complete, and offer feedback to officers.

4.2 As part of the upcoming thematic audit on leadership, Audit Scotland have requested documentation relating to:

- The new Council Plan;
- The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan;
- Climate Change;
- Performance Reporting;
- Covid 19 Recovery and Renewal; and
- Self-evaluation.

4.3 A cross-Directorate officer working group has been established to progress these requests. Oversight of this will be provided by the Best Value Working Group.

#### **5. Legal and Procurement Implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report

#### **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 Not applicable.

#### **7. Human Resources Implications**

7.1 Not applicable.

#### **8. Risk**

##### ***8.1 Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations***

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

##### ***8.2 Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

8.2.1 Rejecting the recommendations may impact on the reputation of the Council.

#### **9. Equalities**

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that

affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

## **10. Sustainable Development Implications**

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

## **11. Options Appraisal**

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

## **12. Link to Council Plan**

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Commitment 1 of the Council Plan: Fair and Effective Leadership/ Leadership that promotes fairness.

## **13. Results of Consultation**

- 13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.
- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Dowe, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

**Background Papers** [Audit Scotland - Best Value Assurance Report - published on 27 October 2021](#)

[Best Value Assurance Report - Action Plan 2021-22](#)

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**Date: 13 March 2023**

## Best Value Assurance Report - Action Plan 2021-22

**Recommendation 1 The Council should confirm that it has the capacity and skills required to increase its pace of improvement in key aspects of Best Value, such as community empowerment, financial and workforce planning and transformation Where appropriate external support should be sought from other Councils, or the Improvement Service, to help with focussing its areas of improvement. (paragraph 119)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Secure additional funding to add temporary resources to key areas of Best Value	Chief Executive	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Resource requirements will now be considered by Best Value Working Group
Engage the Improvement Service on aspects of Best Value	Chief Executive	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Director of Strategic Change and Communities in regular contact with Improvement Service to ensure they can assist in delivery of Best Value

**Recommendation 2 The Council prepare both medium and long-term financial plans. The plans should consider changes to both income and expenditure, identify both budget gaps and set out the actions necessary to address those gaps. There should also be a clear linkage to Council priorities (paragraph 62)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Develop a Long-Term Financial Outlook (LTFO) that draws together all known factors which affect the Council's financial position and its financial sustainability over the longer term (i.e., a ten-year period). The LTFO will be refreshed bi-annually	Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	The Long-Term Financial Outlook (LTFO) and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was considered and approved by Leadership Panel in 2021.
Develop a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that provides a clear understanding of the anticipated resources available to the Council in the short and medium term (i.e. three years) in order to deliver its priorities and objectives. The MTFP will be updated annually	Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Plan developed and approved

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
<p>Ensure clear and continued linkage between the LTFO and MTFP with other key strategic documents, including the Council Plan, Workforce Plan, Long Term Financial Linkage evidenced in future strategic developments. Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) Ongoing and aligned to Council Plan and Workforce Plan Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy</p>	<p>Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>31-Dec-2022</p>	<p>31-Mar-2023</p>	<p>The Long-Term Financial Outlook (LTFO) and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) published in October 2021 are an essential component of the overall financial framework, that sets the context for medium term and annual financial planning and ensures that resources are targeted towards achieving Council priorities. The updated MTFP in November 2022 reinforced this linkage by clearly stating that the purpose of a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is to provide a clear direction on how the Council will manage its financial resources in the short to medium term to ensure they are deployed effectively to achieve Council Priorities and objectives. It plays a vital part of decision-making and forms the basis of the Council's stewardship over taxpayer's funds. It is an integral part of the Council's financial and planning framework.</p> <p>The setting of the new Council Plan and the new Priorities contained with Plan, together with the resulting Service Plans, require to be taken forward within the context of the financial resources available as outlined within the LTFO and updated MTFP. Future iteration of both the LTFO and MTFP will continue this process of determining the overall financial environment and setting the financial envelope for the achievement of the Council priorities.</p>
<p>Develop a public-facing communication plan to publicise and explain the significant financial challenges facing the Council for the foreseeable future</p>	<p>Director of Strategic Change and Communities</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>31-Mar-2022</p>	<p>31-Mar-2023</p>	<p>The communication plan has been implemented including information videos to outline to the public what the financial challenges will be.</p>
<p>Develop a clear understanding of public needs, preferences, and priorities through a robust and recurring engagement process, aligned with the local government electoral cycle</p>	<p>Director of Strategic Change and Communities</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>31-Dec-2022</p>	<p>31-Mar-2023</p>	<p>An online engagement survey has been implemented to support the development of the Council Plan with the opportunity for ongoing engagement over the next few months. Timescales for the development of the Council Plan and supporting Service Plans has been set out with a target to deliver these by June 2023.</p>
<p>Develop processes to support Elected Members in setting clear, prioritised objectives based on the Council Plan and the projected needs of the public,</p>	<p>Service Lead – Policy, Performance and Community Planning</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>31-Dec-2022</p>	<p>31-Mar-2023</p>	<p>Further engagement between the Administration, the Council Leadership Team and the Budget Working Group have taken place to help set the high-level priorities. These priorities were made available to the</p>

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
including service redesign, reduction, and cessation where appropriate					public, staff and partners to comment on and the feedback was incorporated into the final plan.
Engage with external partners (e.g. Improvement Service) to ensure that the design and delivery of community engagement improvement actions are effective and reflects best practice	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Thriving Communities are liaising with the HSP, 3rd Sector and other CPP partners to improve community engagement across CPP. It is proposed that the existing CPP Communities Reference Group is refreshed and called Community Engagement Coordination Group. (Proposal Attached). Internally improvements have already taken place, this includes the established consultation officer's group, engagement with Community Councils and the roll out of Place Standards toolkit. Initial meetings have taken place with the Improvement Service and a presentation was delivered by them to Senior Management. Early engagement has commenced in relation to best practice engagement activity.

**Recommendation 3 The Council should improve and embed workforce planning, so that service workforce plans are developed consistently across the Council. The plans should include clear links to the Council's priorities and to its strategic change programme. (paragraph 77)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Convene a Corporate Working Group to develop a workforce plan for 2022-25 that links to the Council's strategic priorities and improvement areas in relation to Best Value	Chief Executive	100%	31-Dec-2021	31-Dec-2021	Complete, a workforce planning group has been convened.
Workforce Plan Implementation	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	The draft workforce plan was considered at Service and Performance panel in October 2022 and is now being progressed to Cabinet in November 2022.

**Recommendation 4 The Council should make sure that its transformation work is fully aligned and integrated to its covid recovery planning work and improve its approach to its Strategic Change Programme by: • Adding greater detail about individual projects • Setting clear timelines for each project • Developing a benefits realisation tracker to assess whether the Council has achieved its aims. (paragraphs 123 and 124)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Update Leadership Panel on the development and delivery of the South Ayrshire Way Strategic Change Programme	Project Implementation Co-ordinator	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	To date, the following updates have been provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Panel - 15 February</li> <li>• Service and Improvement Panel - 29 March</li> <li>• Cabinet - 14 June</li> </ul> An update will also go to the Service Improvement Panel in October.
Development of a Communications Strategy including the roll out of key messages to staff, stakeholders, partners and the public on the launch of the Change Programme; key themes and outputs and the benefits that will be achieved	Project Implementation Co-ordinator	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Communication Strategy approved and implemented, and updates provided to the Strategic Change Executive
Implementation of internal effective mechanisms for reporting programme progress and in particular tracking benefits	Project Implementation Co-ordinator	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Benefits Realisation Plan has been approved by Strategic Change Executive (26 August 2021). It was also shared at Service and Performance Panel on 29 March 2022 which noted the approach that the Council is taking to benefit realisation and implementing trackers.
Continue to progress the delivery of projects, focussing on moving projects from the scoping/exploratory phase and into delivery	Project Implementation Co-ordinator	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	There will be a continued focus on moving projects into implementation.
Review governance arrangements across the Council to integrate its approach to transformation and change; avoid duplication, promote recovery from covid and inform best practice	Assistant Director, Strategic Change	100%	31-May-2022	31-May-2023	A proposed governance model has been developed by Officers subject to completing a review of existing governance arrangements. This model will now be taken forward with relevant Officers to refine reporting requirements and avoid duplication.

**Recommendation 5 The Council needs to build on the Service Recovery and Improvement Plans and the Community Engagement Strategy to ensure that future community engagement and consultation is consistent, and fully involves communities to develop how Council services will operate in the future in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in order that real change and outcomes can be delivered. (paragraphs 25 and 112)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Establish a new Thriving Communities service has been established to lead community engagement across South Ayrshire	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	A new Thriving Communities service has been established and implementation of new structure and formation of community-based locality teams is ongoing
An annual log of all consultations and engagement will be published	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Mar-2023	Officers group established who will now log consultations. Information will be published in April 2023 and annually thereafter in line with reporting cycle.
Thriving Communities will be responsible for engaging with local communities to help develop local place plans – November – March 2022 already underway and planned	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Place plans now complete. Recruitment is underway to appoint an Officer to take forward the delivery of these, working with communities to establish priorities and an action plan.
A new online platform will be launched in January 2022 and will provide an opportunity for residents to let public services and community groups know what is important to the people of South Ayrshire	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Jan-2022	31-Jan-2022	South Ayrshire Community Conversations' (Consul) Training has been rolled out to internal officers and 3rd sector partners. The platform will be piloted in July 2022 as part of the consultation to amend the Community Council Boundaries in North Carrick.
A new officer's group will be established to support and improve consultation across the organisation. We will continue to work alongside the Consultation Institute to improve our consultation processes	Director of Strategic Change and Communities	100%	31-Jan-2022	31-Jan-2022	09-Jun-2022 Officers group established and officers commenting on the Teams channel already provide support and guidance for colleagues. Training for Consul has been rolled out.



**Recommendation 6 The Council should improve performance reporting, by: • Setting targets for its KPIs • Including a summary of performance against KPIs in its performance reports to Members • Increasing the frequency of reports to Elected Members • Making performance reports more accessible to the public (paragraphs 32, 47 and 51)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Explore options for the future iterations of the Council Plan with Members and community planning partners and consider how reporting could be improved	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Housing	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Draft Council Plan priorities due to be agreed at Council in March. If approved, officers will work with members to develop a new Performance Management Framework that will be agreed by Cabinet.
As part of the development of the new Council Plan a greater emphasis will be on measuring outcomes	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Housing	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Draft Council Plan priorities due to be agreed at Council in March. Each priority is supported by outcomes and these will be used to monitor and measure progress.
Review the performance monitoring framework to improve public performance reporting	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Housing	100%	28-Feb-2022	28-Feb-2022	The review of the Performance Monitoring Framework was approved at the Service and Performance Panel that took place on Tuesday 8th February 2022.

**Recommendation 7 To help them carry out their roles, including their responsibilities under Best Value, Elected Members should take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided by the Council. The Council should continue to work with Elected Members to understand and address reasons for variable uptake of training (paragraph 30)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Conversion of all training to on-line Coast training courses and production of online Member's pack	Head of Legal and Regulatory Services	100%	28-Feb-2022	31-Aug-2022	Arrangements in place for conversion of training to online COAST modules where appropriate, online Members' Induction pack delivered May 2022
Consideration of medium for delivery of training – i.e. by Hybrid training where Members can be both present in person and attending on-line	Head of Legal and Regulatory Services	100%	31-May-2022	31-Aug-2022	Members are able to access training both in Hybrid and in person. On occasion there are some sessions which are run as purely in person sessions.
Return to PDP and personalisation of training needs with new Members intake	Head of Legal and Regulatory Services	100%	30-Apr-2022	31-Dec-2022	Political Skills Self-Assessment Tool has been introduced and rolled out to Members.
Further develop new Member induction training	Head of Legal and Regulatory Services	100%	30-Apr-2022	30-Apr-2022	A timetable of Induction Training was completed and an electronic new member's induction pack provided to all members and uploaded on a freshly designed new members page on the Core (the Council's intranet)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Report to Service and Performance Panel on training that is delivered with details of Member attendance	Head of Legal and Regulatory Services	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Report on Member training will call at Service and Performance Panel on the 7 February 2023 (will be 100% complete on 7 February 2023)